

UNCLAS SENSITIVE PARIS FR 01458

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ACTION: UNESCO AMB  
INFO: POL ECON AMBU AMBO DCM SCI DAO

DISSEMINATION: UNESCO

CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:DTKILLION

DRAFTED: DCM:SCENGELKEN

CLEARED: POL:DROSTROFF

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS FR 001458

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SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR IO; PASS TO DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

E.O. 12598: N/A

TAGS: SCUL PREL UNESCO

SUBJECT: WORLD HERITAGE ELECTION RESULTS

**¶11.** (U) Summary: Elections were held October 26 during the 17th meeting of the World Heritage General Assembly at UNESCO to replace 12 of the 21 Member States on the World Heritage Committee. Changes in the Rules of Procedure were adopted including a voluntary reduction in term length to four years (down from six years) for World Heritage Committee members, and a minimum gap of four years between terms on the Committee. End summary.

**¶12.** (U) The following countries were elected to the World Heritage Committee:

Cambodia  
Estonia  
Ethiopia  
France  
Iraq  
Mali  
Mexico  
Russia (special ballot - non-represented group)  
South Africa  
Switzerland  
Thailand  
United Arab Emirates (special ballot, state without a site)

**¶13.** (U) Several changes in the General Assembly's Rules of Procedure were adopted, after a heated and often chaotic day-long debate, in an effort to bring greater geographic representation into the composition of the WH Committee and to simplify the electoral process. Notably, a four-year moratorium before seeking re-election to the Committee, merely a gentleman's agreement until now, was formally incorporated into the Rules of Procedure. Also, voluntary WH Committee term limits were adopted, inserted as a footnote into the Rules of Procedure. Other changes were made to ensure that non-represented geographic groups and states without any property on the World Heritage List are assured a seat through separate ballots.

For this reason, voting for the twelve vacant seats took place in three separate rounds:

- The first round was a special election for one seat which was reserved for a country having no sites on the World Heritage List. The only candidate was the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE was elected by acclamation without any balloting taking place.

- Although the World Heritage Convention does not formally recognize the traditional UN and UNESCO regional groups, the second round was

devoted to the election of one seat reserved for any geographic group currently unrepresented on the World Heritage Committee. In this case, Group II - Eastern Europe, had been unrepresented on the WH Committee. Six countries were candidates for the seat. The first round of voting was inconclusive, as no state won an absolute majority (half of all votes, plus one). A second round was held where the candidate receiving the highest number of votes was declared the winner. The Russian Federation won the election, with 54 votes.

- The third round of voting was a general round for the remaining ten seats. Five seats were filled in the first ballot by those states receiving an absolute majority of votes: France, Switzerland, Thailand, Cambodia, and South Africa. The winners in the second ballot in this round (highest number of votes received) were: Estonia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Mexico, and Mali.

**¶4.** (U) With the election completed, the full 21-member World Heritage Committee now has the following composition:

- Group I (North America/Europe):

Sweden  
France (new)  
Switzerland (new)

- Group II (Eastern Europe):

Estonia (new)  
Russia (new)

- Group III (GRULAC - Latin America and Caribbean):

Mexico (new)  
Barbados  
Brazil

- Group IV (ASPAC - Asia - Pacific):

Cambodia (new)  
Thailand (new)  
Australia  
China

- Group V(a) (Sub-Saharan Africa):

Ethiopia (new)  
Mali (new)  
South Africa (new)  
Nigeria

- Group V(b) (Arab states):

Iraq (new)  
United Arab Emirates (new)  
Egypt  
Jordan  
Bahrain

**¶5.** (SBU) Comment: Overall, from a U.S. perspective, the results of the elections are positive and should result in a WH Committee that is more geographically balanced and that could remain politically moderate. Iran was not elected, having received 44 votes, just three votes short of capturing a seat. Both Cambodia and Thailand were elected to the WH Committee, keeping some balance, but also guaranteeing future debates on the Preah Vihear temple site, over which the two countries have had recent military skirmishes. Russia's election will not help U.S. concerns regarding the treatment of sites in Kosovo, originally nominated by Serbia. However, the election of four states that recognize Kosovo (UAE, Switzerland, France, and Estonia) will hopefully bring some balance to those discussions. The UAE and Iraq have increased the strong Arab presence now on the WH Committee, which could create difficulties for Israel, given the past disputes between Jordan and Israel concerning the reconstruction of the ascent to the Mughrabi Gate at Jerusalem's Temple Mount site. The next meeting of the World Heritage Committee is scheduled to take place in Brasilia beginning July 25, 2010. The United States, though no longer a Committee member, will send an observer delegation, as voting will take place on the two U.S. sites nominated for inscription, Mount Vernon and Hawaii's Papahanaumokuakea marine reserve.